

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, D.C. 20515

April 20, 2022

Honorable Merrick Garland  
Attorney General  
United States Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland,

We write to alert the Department of Justice to a potentially significant threat to the constitutional right to vote in the state of Georgia.

Georgia has a long, unfortunate history of making it more difficult for people to exercise their right to vote. We thank you and your colleagues at the Department of Justice for your leadership in challenging Georgia's suppressive elections law, SB 202.<sup>1</sup> However, more work remains to ensure voter suppression efforts in Georgia are stopped and do not go unchallenged.

As you know, the National Voter Registration Act requires that states offer voter registration opportunities to people at motor vehicle agencies. Since 2016, Georgia has utilized automatic voter registration at Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS) to increase voter participation and make it easier for people to register to vote when they apply for a driver's license. This change helped increase the registration rate of Georgia voters from 76 percent in 2016 to 95 percent in 2020.<sup>2</sup> However, recent reports indicate that the rate of drivers utilizing the automatic voter registration process at DDS has fallen from 79 percent in 2020 to just 39 percent in 2021.<sup>3</sup>

In January 2021, DDS launched a new computer system, Georgia Driver Record and Integrated Vehicle Enterprise System (Georgia DRIVES). The recent and steep decline in drivers utilizing automatic voter registration at DDS raises serious questions regarding access to the ballot in this year's election. Given that the 2016 policy was in place for five years, many Georgians now assume that when they change or receive a driver's license, they are automatically registered to vote at the appropriate location. However, these sharply declining numbers suggest that people may believe they have registered or re-registered to vote when this may not be the case.

Further, we know that the majority of newly registered voters since 2016 are minority voters: at least 55 percent of newly registered voters between 2016 and 2020 were voters of color.<sup>4</sup> Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act prohibits "voting practices or procedures that discriminate on the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-files-lawsuit-against-state-georgia-stop-racially-discriminatory>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/document\\_library/files/2020\\_EAVS\\_Report\\_Final\\_508c.pdf](https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/document_library/files/2020_EAVS_Report_Final_508c.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ajc.com/politics/did-georgia-weaken-automatic-voter-registration/7LR5XNN6ZZCA7GJJR2HVEHPTXM/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/12/21/black-latino-and-asian-americans-have-been-key-to-georgias-registered-voter-growth-since-2016/>

basis of race, color, or membership in one of the language minority groups.”<sup>5</sup> Given the increase in minority voter registrations following implementation of the 2016 policy, the decline in registrations at DDS, either because of policy changes or design flaws, will likely have a disproportionate impact on minority voters’ ability to register to vote.

Georgia’s voter registration deadline is less than one week away, and early voting for the primary election begins in less than two weeks. In order to ensure every Georgian can exercise their right to vote, we urge the Department of Justice to investigate the precipitous decline in automatic voter registrations through the Georgia Department of Driver Services and, if necessary, take timely action to protect Georgians’ constitutional right to vote.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your expedient response.

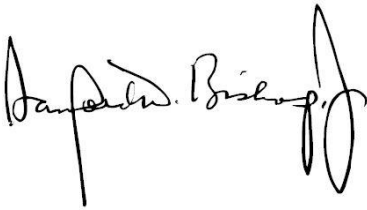
Sincerely,



Carolyn Bourdeaux  
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.justice.gov/crt/section-2-voting-rights-act#:~:text=Section%20of%20the%20Voting%20Rights%20Act%20of%201965%20prohibits,\)\(2\)%20of%20the%20Act](https://www.justice.gov/crt/section-2-voting-rights-act#:~:text=Section%20of%20the%20Voting%20Rights%20Act%20of%201965%20prohibits,)(2)%20of%20the%20Act)